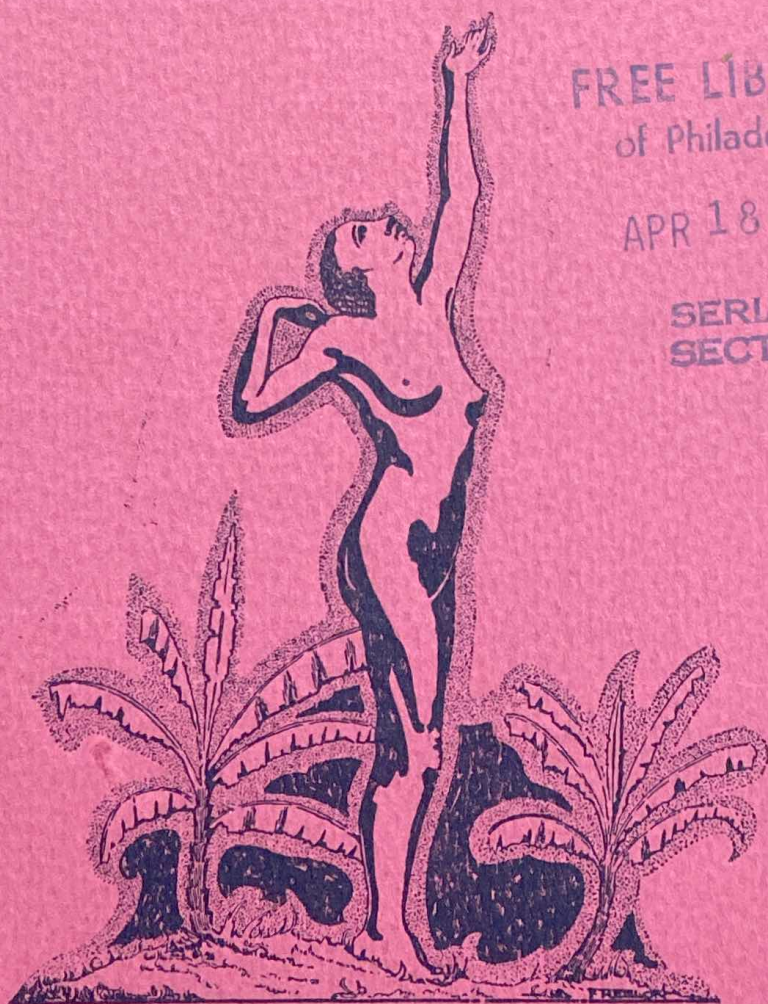


BLACK OPALS

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HAIL NEGRO YOUTH

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BLACK OPALS

VOLUME I CHRISTMAS 1927 NUMBER 2

NOSTALGIA

Jessie Fauset

Lonely log cabin
On the road to Notasulga,
Sighing and sagging and quaking;
Let me breathe to the heart of your walls
A secret—
To keep it from breaking.
Once in a Harlem cellar,
A brown girl,
Wiggling and strutting
In a stranger's arms,
Dreaming of you
For a God-given moment—
Forgot to proffer her charms.

FOLUMBO

James H. Young

*"A groun' spider climb on a centipede's back,
An' stuck on dere wid ghoulisn' glee.
I will choke you t' death, you son o' the sea,
Befo' you succeed in chokin' me"—*

Thus began Folumbo.....

The little island of St. Thomas took on a new and rarer beauty as the moon silvered the dark tropical heavens. Dignified palm trees sighed, bending to the warm caresses of a wind that had danced all day in the hot sun.

In the cocoanut trees monkeys chattered. Toohee owls whistled shrill calls that perturbed even the sly mongoose as he scurried across snaky moonlit paths.

In a circular clearing, rimmed in by tall trees, and glowing in the moonlight, sat a group of little children. Huddled close together, they sat motionless, silent perhaps for the first time that day. Their eyes were fixed intently upon a grizzled old man who might have been any age up to a hundred years or more. In the great silence of the tropic night the thin tones of his piping voice made shivers run up and down their spines.

"Now, dey was a wicked woman down Gualaloupe way, call suckinyaw. Her grease she skin an' slip out. Den sneak up on you n' change yuh t' tree or smoke, or any ol' thing."

Hisssing each word, Folumbo poked a bony finger into the darkness, over the head of little Michel. Michel gasped, shrinking away from the pointing spectre, and glanced fearfully over his shoulder. The other children sat breathless.

"Now, dis suckinyaw, him have sebben debbils in her. Eb'ry night he grease she skin an' slip out. Den she lay skin in de corner. Go fly about, makin' evil wid all odder folkses. She git like smoke, slide

under de do', even slide in between cracks in de shutters. She git b-e-e-e-g lika dis, den him t-e-e-e-e-n-y like so big. Mind-ja dis in Guadaloupe.

"Ma ol' 'ooman born with caul ova' she head. She see all de jumbies, an' bless me if I kyaint too! She tell me dat when I fin' suckinyaw, put salt in skin, den she no able to get in agin. Mek skin crinkle up, so, den po' suckinyaw, goo'-bye.

"One night, bless me if I don' hyeh noise lika dis. 'Yoo-hoo, whoo-oo-yoo-hoo-who-oo'. Dat suckinyaw sure's yuh bohn. Ebery body scared ha'f t' def. Hidin' eb'ry whah. Not me. I go huntin' fo' dat suckinyaw. Me fin' de skin. Yah.

"I go eb'ry whah. No min' suckinyaw; me fin' skin. Glory be"—Folumbo's eyes gleamed, and his long bony fingers spread apart as he stretched his arms up towards the moon.

"I fin' suckinyaw's skin out in Tortola's barn, way ova' in corner. I runs right home: brings some salt, an' sprinkles han'ful on suckinyaw skin. Ol' skin crackle an' pop; creepy blue light come out like a worm, an' straight at me, don' you fergit. Mon, I runs. Hyeh me? Runs! Been runnin' eber since. Dat why I hyeh, see?

The children shrank back in terror, too fascinated to scream, too chilled to move.

"Long bout midnight-jus' fo' midnight mus' been, I hears awful screamin's. Soun' like woman, an' it was down by Tortola's barn. Modder say it suckinyaw dyin'. I say nodding, but me Folumbo—Folumbo, me know what dat is.

"Nex' mornin, whut you t'ink? Whut? Ol' Tortola's barn done burn down in de night an nobody know anyt'ing 'bout it 'till daybreak. Now whut you t'ink o' dat?"

Folumbo's voice trailed off into a whisper. It was hoarse and sibilant. The children did not stir.

In the calm clear moonlight Folumbo trailed away into the darkness of the thick shrubbery which surrounded the island.

TO ONE WHO MIGHT HAVE
BEEN MY FRIEND

Nellie R. Bright

Do you remember how that glowing morn
We stood hands clasped beside an amber pool
Of lilies pale as your fair skin, and cool
On my brown cheek was the misty breath of dawn?
You said, "We two are friends, for we were born
To dwell at beauty's shrine. There is no rule
That being brown and fair, we play the fool
'Til friendship flee, a tarnished gleam forlorn.
'Twas then I saw amid the thin-leave grass
The souls of dead men yet to be;
Blue fires, old thrilling hopes leaped and died
When you in dread, a childhood friend espied—
And seeing his slow smile, you shrank from me—
Then,—my faith dead—I turned—and—let—you pass.

QUERY

Nellie R. Bright

Great wonder that my blood spurts ruby red
And not a green and slimy stream instead—
That all my tears are salt, not bitter gall,
That I still live, and love and laugh at all!
And that my teeth are lustrous, pearly white,
Instead of blue cold blades that clash at night.
Why do you stand aloof and bid me pray,
You who sow strife and pain upon my way?
How does my soul live on mauled by hate's rod?
You cannot know 'twas made by One called God.

CERTAIN PEOPLE

William A. Hill

They grin
And they ridicule
They call me fool
And say I sin
To pour out my soul in song.
They do not know
My weird soft tone
Is a prayer
That rises to my Master's throne
For them who do me wrong.

I SHALL GO THROUGH LIFE

Elsie Taylor Du Triewille

I shall go through life looking upward
At the sun, moon and stars.
I shall stoop to caress gay flowers
At my feet; to luxuriate
In the velvet verdure of the grasses;
To cool my body in the kindly shadows
Of willowy trees.
But even then, I shall gaze upward
At the glory of the sun,
The enchantment of the moon,
The intricacy of the stars.
The sun shall lead my feet
Along blazing paths of glory;
The moon shall wrap me in a silver gossamer.
And I shall dream;
And the beckoning stars shall lure me
Into fields of golden promise.
I shall go through life looking upward,
And my soul shall grow toward the sun.

LAI-LI

Mae V. Cowdery

Lai-li was dancing in the moonlight....Once more.
Her brown body gleamed like gold in its path.

Fearfully he whispered her name.....Once more.
"Lai-li.....Lai-li....."

She did not answer....Ah! there was no need.....
She was coming nearer, nearer. Slowly she danced.
There was no sound save for the pounding of his
heart and the magic melody of the waves rolling slow-
ly to shore.....All was as on that night when first
he saw her, Lai-li....."Moon Flower."

Many, many, years had passed since then. Time
had dealt gently with her. She was even more
beautiful.

He could feel her breath on his cheek, fragrant as
the perfume imprisoned in the crimson petals of the
flowers she wore in the ebon coils of her hair. Closer
she came, her tiny feet making no sound as she beat
her love song on the silver sands.

Would she know him? Would she forgive?.....
Had her heart forgotten the wound he had dealt in
the reckless days of his youth?.....He surely had
suffered.

Again he whispered her name.

"Lai-li.....Lai-li....."

Her golden arms were twining around his neck.
Her body yielded, as on that night—so long ago.
Her lids drooped over eyes like midnight pools, hid-
ing the fire within.....Her lips were cool, like dew,
on his feverish onesAs on that night.....so
long ago.

Once more they would dance the strange jungle

dance she had taught him.....once more they would dance.....she had forgiven.....

God! He had forgotten he was no longer youngTime had dealt roughly with him....It was his punishment. His limbs could no longer bend and whirl.....His arms could no longer hold close their precious burden, as he sought to lift her and dart to the shadows.....once more.

"Lai-li! Lai-li! Do not go! Stay! Stay! I am coming! I.....am.....coming."

The moon passed behind a cloud. The waves paused an instant on their home-ward flight. Air hung silent.

Again two figures danced a jungle dance in the moonlight.....Cold and ivory blending, caressed by the moon's silver breath.....Two figures slept once more in the soft embrace of the sand, watched over by the cool shadows.....Two loved once more.....

In the pale grey light of morning the waves still crept to the shore. The sun was lazily peeping over the eastern hills. All was as it had been the day before. In the cove a fishing sloop of olden days lay, her decks deserted. As the sky turned to its usual topaz blue, two figures appeared on deck. One scanned the shore with searching eyes. Quickly they descended into a small row boat and rapidly made their way to the lonely beach.

"Wonder where the Capt's gone? Can't see a thing on this dump of sand.....He sure must be a little off in the upper story to come to a place like this. He's a regular circus in all the sea ports with this ole sloop. I sure wouldn't have come on this trip if you hadn't been so blamed curious! Drat you..... I'm just a soft hearted ole nut after all!"

"Well it ain't doing yaa a bit a good to grumble about it now. You oughta thought about that 'foe

ya' come, perhaps we wus both a coupla nuts, but the Capt's been mighty good to us when we wus down and out. Any how he can't last much longer with that cough.....Did you notice how he changed as we neared the blame island? He was blattin' to hisself about some Lily, or somethin'.....Bet he had one of them native sweeties.

"Well I'll be jiggered! Here's the ole boy fast asleep!"

"Yeh? Well he won't be waking in this place. Poor ole Capt. I'm glad he's happy! Lookit the smile on his face! There ain't a blooming wrinkle on it. I'm so glad he's happy....."

"S'awright Pat. We're just a pair of soft hearted blokes, but I'm blamed glad we brought him here. Let's bury him here. Seems like that wus what he wanted.....He knew he wus'nt gonma last much longer....."

The two slowly made their way back to the sloop and as the sun finally beamed bright in the sky the sloop sailed around the bay and on into the open sea. The two on its deck failed to see.....to hear.....

Lai-li and the "Capt." walking arm in arm (as of yore) and singing to them a farewell song..... could not see their figures blend in the spray of the waves as their lips met.

"Lai-liLal-liLai-li."



JAPANESE HOKKU POEMS

Lewis Alexander

I am but a leaf
Clinging to the tree of life
In the world's garden.

* * * *

Last night I saw you,
A dream rose and I your stem;
Showing you the sun.

* * * *

They tear at my heart—
The days that knew no desire.
For they were wasted.

* * * *

Night shadows woo me.
I cling to the crescent moon
Like the evening star.

* * * *

The moon—ah the moon
Draped in the velvet of night
Brocaded with stars.

* * * *

Do not bring lanterns
I say, "Darkness is supreme
Delight beyond words."

* * * *

Drops of silver blood
Are falling from the sky's heart.
All the world has woe.

* * * *

O night of Shadows
Seal my lips with your magic
Of silent beauty!

*A LETTER**Idabelle Yeiser*

Madrid, Spain, July.

Chum, dear:

When I said good-bye to my friends in Paris, and boarded the train for Spain, a terrible feeling of fear and loneliness came over me. Just the idea of taking such a long journey to a strange country where there would not be a single familiar face to welcome me, as there had been in Paris, seemed frightful. But it was a case of crossing bridges before getting to them for the entire trip from Paris to Madrid proved one of the most interesting ones ever taken.

There I was in one of the little compartments of which I had read so much, with seven French companions. It is ever so much more interesting to travel in a French train than in an American one, for one can make acquaintances so much easier (providing one is familiar with the language of the country). There was an old man in one corner, nearest the window, who put on a tight cap and soon went to sleep, for we were to be on the train all night, and second class travelers are not provided with a sleeper. Opposite him was a young fellow with an elderly woman whom I took to be his mother. In the corner seats near the door were two young girls, while opposite me were a young married couple, still lovers, perhaps on their honeymoon. They spent the entire night fondly caressing each other, unconscious or irregardless of their fellow travelers. But that is a part of the individuality of the French. They do not allow themselves to be governed by the opinion of the outside world. It was all amusing and interesting to me, perhaps because it was so different from traveling in a long coach, with seat after seat of business-like Americans, all in a mad rush and anxiety to reach their destinations, with probably nothing definite to do after they get there.

Our train was an express, so it made but few stops during the night. Soon after daylight my fellow travelers began to descend at various stations, till soon I was left entirely alone in the compartment. We were then very near the border line.

Border lines, chum, have always been abstract, imaginary lines to me, but now they are quite concrete and real. All night I had been in a French atmosphere and then at seven-thirty in the morning—presto-changeo—everything was completely Spanish. The custom officers appeared so stern and military that I began to feel another chill of fear, but they were really quite kind. Fortunately I knew a little Spanish so without much difficulty I was able to get baggage attended to, change some money, and eat breakfast before time to leave.

That day's journey from Irun to Madrid was an interesting one, but a difficult one to describe. Naturally, we came through the Pyrenees Mountains. Their beauty is indescribable. However, nearly every time I became absorbed in a pretty view we would go through a tunnel. It's a big disadvantage trying to see mountains from a train, for one is likely to see more tunnels than mountains, but during the intervals the views are well worth while.

The view was constantly changing. First the mountains, then the plains, here and there little villages whose cathedral towers always towered over the tiny houses. Sometimes there would be long stretches of barren land, but just at the point when this barrenness would become monotonous or oppressive, there would be a quaint picturesque view, such as a herd of sheep, or goats, or even pigs, grazing on the hillside, or fields dotted here and there with little grass huts, under which peasants were seeking shelter from the intense sun, or perhaps a sheltered spot along the banks of a stream where women were kneeling, washing their clothes.

Madrid was reached about 9:30 P. M., and truly I think the most picturesque part of the entire journey and surely the most amusing was my taxi ride from the station to my stopping place. The "taxi" was an old fashioned closed cab, drawn by three horses abreast. The horses were adorned with merry little bells, somewhat like our sleighbells. On the top of the cab was a place for luggage where my trunk had been put. On the high seat outside sat the driver and his assistants, both Spaniards, who were having a heated discussion as to the exact location of where I wished to go. Picture all this rolling along cobbled streets for fully forty minutes. We passed through one street where a fete was its height, for it was now after ten o'clock and cool. Everyone seemed gay. The bright Spanish shawls well suited the gay spirits of these people.

Soon the fete was left in the background, and we continued to roll along, our bells still jingling, for another quarter of an hour.

I am now quite content to spend a time in Spain with these merry people, and am glad I had the courage to come alone.

Hasta luego — Pal.

TWIN HEAVENS

Gertrude P. McBrown

An endless stretch of blue
Flecked with wee silver lights,
A luminous, laughing ball
Brightening the inky nights.
Little brown babies tucked
Away in fleecy beds
While fleeting, fairy dreams
Dance through their drowsy heads.

THE ELF-MAN

Gertrude P. McBrown

One sunny Autumn day
When I went out to play,
An Elf-man in a tree
Dropped colored leaves on me.

FAIRIES AND BROWNIES

Gertrude P. McBrown

Yes, I believe in fairies.
I believe in brownies too.
Yes, I believe in fairies,
Because I know they're true.
And if you'll learn to love them,
They'll come and play with you.

A PREFACE

(A Foreword For A Story You Might Write)

Marita Bonner

God's Bar of Justice is not a bargain counter. You cannot elbow your way up there through a crowd and bend over to haggle—to barter.

You cannot say—"A little more of this—ten more years of living and you can use my soul for a cornerstone of HELL!"

Nor thus: "Take my eyes—take my ears—but leave me my heart!"

Nor yet—"Take my soul! I grant you that! Only let me have the body to do as I wish."

Not—"God, you take this and leave me that. You do this and I'll do that."

You do not bargain and barter. You merely take your yard of suffering—your yards of Hell—your half yard of Remorse—your yards of Pain—your yards of Sorrow—your thread of Joy—which you are paying for, and make a mantle. You make your mantle and wrap yourself in it—and go away—along the Road.

HE MADE ME SING

Gertrude P. McBrown

God knew I'd struggled lone and long,
He heard me crying in the night;
He knew I was not strong
Enough to carry out the fight,
So he drew me from the noisy throng;
And breathed into my soul a song.

TIME

Mae V. Cowdery

I used to sit on a high green hill
And long for you to be like the clouds,
Soft and white.....
And your eyes be like heaven's blue
And your hair like the tree sifted sun.....
But then I was young, and my eyes yet
Round with wonder.
Now I sit by an endless road and watch
As you come.....swiftly like dusk
Your hair like a starless night
Your eyes like deep violet shadows,
And soft arms cradle me on your sweet
Brown breast.....for I have grown old
And my eyes hold unshed tears,
And my face is lean and hard in daylight's
Mocking glare.
But with the night
Dusk fingers and lips like dew
Erase each wound of time
And my eyes grow round with wonder
At your beauty.

PARDON US FOR BRAGGING

Frankly Black Opals is very proud of its distinguished record in the field of art and letters for the year 1927. Do you know that in the Opportunity Contest:

First Prize for Personal Experience Sketch went to Idabelle Yeiser?

Second Prize for Essay went to James H. Young?

Second Prize in Art went to Allan Randall Freelon? Also two honorable mentions.

Third Prize for Personal Experience Sketch went to Nellie R. Bright? Also honorable mention.

In the Crisis Contest—

First Prize for Poetry went to Mae V. Cowdery?

Fourth Prize in Art went to Allan Randall Freelon?

"Goal," a poem by Mae V. Cowdery, which appeared in the Spring number of Black Opals has been selected by William S. Braithewaite for his 1928 anthology.

Black Opals wishes to felicitate Marita Bonner, a contributor to this issue, and all other prize winners in the recent Crisis Contest.



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LET US HEAR FROM YOU

We thank you for your interest in Black Opals, but let us know what you are thinking. Send us your ideas, and best of all original manuscripts and drawings.

Address:

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